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BULLYING IN A THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM

by
Kristen Falco

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
~~June 18~~, 2008

Approved by _____
Advisor

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ABSTRACT

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BULLYING IN A THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM
2007/08
Professor David C. Hespe
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this research study was to determine how teaching students about bullying affects a third grade classroom. Students in a third grade classroom were given a pre-unit survey to determine their knowledge and experience with bullying. A four week unit on bullying was then taught to all students. Each week students were given a separate survey to determine their experience with bullying throughout the week. By the last week of the study, the number of bullying incidents was reduced by 50% showing that educating students about bullying reduced the amount of bullying in the class and created a more caring classroom environment. Implications for implementing bullying education programs in classrooms and school wide were discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I was walking into class after lunch when Nicole immediately ran up to me. “Miss Falco, Miss Falco, Taishia said that she hated Mrs. Jones” she tattled. I took a breath before saying anything. “Nicole, what have we talked about? If there is a problem during lunch you need to tell the lunch aides about it. I am not there so I can not do anything about it.” “But, but” Nicole interrupted, “She said it! Ask Morgan, she heard it too!” “I understand what you are saying, but you need to tell the lunch aide when something like this happens. And we have talked about not tattling on our friends. It’s not nice and we need to be worrying about ourselves, not the rest of the class. It is the teachers’ jobs to discipline the students who are misbehaving, okay?” I asked. Nicole stomped away to her desk, I could tell she was not happy with my response.

I knew that I had to ask Taishia about what happened so I pulled her into the hallway for a second.

“Taishia, I need to talk to you about something you may or may not have said during lunch. I’m not saying that you said it; I just need to ask you. Did you say that you hated Mrs Jones?”

Before I even closed my mouth Taishia exploded, “Are you kidding me? That’s not true, I never said that! Who said I said that? It was Nicole wasn’t it? She’s such a baby! She’s always trying to get me into trouble! I hate her!”

“Taishia,” I said calmly, “It doesn’t matter who said it, all that matters is that you are telling me that it is not true. I believe you, so please do not be angry. You’re not in trouble, everything is fine. I want you to try and relax, go back into the classroom, and get back to work.” I could tell that Taishia was still mad, she was making a face and talking under her breath, but she quietly walked back into the classroom and sat down.

The class ran smoothly for the next hour or so. “Line up for specials. Today we have library so don’t forget your library books,” Mrs. Jones called.

As the class was quietly lining up, I saw Taishia walk over to where Nicole was standing. I began running over to them but before I could get there Taishia pushed Nicole and she fell on the floor.

“That will teach you to tattle on me again, unless you’re too stupid to know what’s good for you!” Taishia yelled.

Mrs. Jones bolted over to the girls and made sure that Nicole was okay before turning to Taishia. “What were you thinking? We do not bully each other in this classroom! Let’s go! To the office!” She grabbed Taishia’s hand and led her out of the room.

The only feeling running through me was complete shock. How could a girl who could be so sweet at times be so mean to her classmates at others?

Purpose Statement

Bullying is not a new problem. It takes place in every school, in every town, in every country and has since children have begun going to school. The vignette above is only one specific instance of bullying and is by no means an isolated occurrence. In fact,

the number of instances and the severity of bullying is currently reaching new levels and has become a very serious problem.

According to Dillion and Lash, bullying is defined as recurring acts of aggression by individuals who have power over their victim (Rowan, 2007). This aggression can be acted out in a number of ways, including physical bullying, such as hitting or pushing, or emotional bullying, such as name calling and teasing. Bullying can also be classified as direct or indirect. Direct bullying includes teasing, punching or hitting, or stealing. Indirect bullying includes the spreading of rumors and excluding individuals from social activities (Rowan, 2007). Direct bullying is more commonly perpetrated and inflicted upon males, while females are more likely to engage in indirect bullying (Banks, 1997).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 28 percent of students between the ages of twelve to eighteen reported being the victims of bullying in 2005 (Schaefer, 2007), up from 15 percent in 1993 (Banks, 1997). That figure does not take into account the number of students who never report instances of bullying. Even without knowing the exact percentage of students who are bullied every year, research suggest that bullying is becoming a bigger problem as time goes on.

There are several characteristics that seem to be consistent in both bullies and the victims of bullying. First, bullies often come from homes where parent supervision is lacking and physical punishment is used. Also, they tend to have high self-esteem, little compassion for others and seem to derive fulfillment from causing others either physical or emotional pain. Finally, bullies enjoy being in control and having power over a situation or another individual. On the other hand, the victims of bullying are often insecure and have low self-esteem. Many times they do not have many friends and may

lack the social knowledge necessary to interact well with their peers. They may have over protective parents and are usually physically smaller or weaker than their peers (Banks, 1997).

There are many long term effects of bullying, both for the bullies and the victims. Bullies tend to carry their negative and aggressive behaviors into adulthood. When they grow up, bullies have a 60 percent chance of being convicted of a crime at least once by the time they turn 24. Victims also suffer long term effects from being bullied. These effects include a fear of school, depression, and low self-esteem, all of which can stay with the person into adulthood (Banks, 1997). In the past decade or so, another serious consequence of bullying has become an increasing problem in the United States: school shootings. Many of the perpetrators of massive acts of violence, such as the shooters from Columbine High School, claim that they did it because they were bullied their entire life and could not take it anymore. If we want to stop these horrific acts, we need to start at the source and do everything in our power as teachers to eliminate bullying in schools.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

Bullying is becoming an increasing problem in schools in the United States. This bullying is causing students to have both long and short term physical and emotional problems. Consequently, the question for this research study is “How does educating students about bullying impact an elementary school classroom?”

Story of the Question

The idea for this research project came to me in the fall of 2007 when I was doing my Clinical Internship I in a third grade class at a suburban school in South Jersey. Within the first week of school a girl named Nicole came up to me crying. She said that

Taishia, another girl in our class, was her “bully” in second grade and was being mean to her again. Over the next two months, I saw many instances of the girls bullying each other, not just Taishia bullying Nicole. These instances ranged from name calling, tattling, bickering, and verbally fighting across the classroom. No matter how many times the girls were told to leave each other alone and mind their own business, they were constantly arguing and bullying each other.

One day the problems between the two girls had gotten out of control. I pulled Taishia aside to talk to her about what was going on because she was the one who instigated the problem the majority of the time. While I was talking to her, I began to realize that she truly did not know that some of the things she was doing were wrong. No matter how many times that I gave her examples of times when she spoke to her classmates rudely, she did not seem to grasp the concept that this was not right. This amazed me! How could a ten year old girl in the third grade not know that it was wrong to bully people?

This realization frightened me, and after talking to other students who also engaged in bullying behaviors, I realized that it was not just Taishia who was having a problem understanding that bullying was wrong, but that many of the students in my class did not know what they were doing was wrong. I understand that kids will be kids, but by third grade they should at least understand that it is wrong to hit other children and call them names. I started to think about what I as an intern, or any teacher, could do to stop instances of bullying in a classroom. How could I educate students about bullying to understand why it is not acceptable in a classroom when some of them obviously had never been exposed to this idea before?

After a lot of thought, I realized that I could not expect children to understand that hitting and calling other students names is wrong if they have never been taught that in the past. The first step to stopping bullying in a classroom needs to be educating students about bullying and teaching them why it is wrong. That teaching needs to be followed up with an emphasis on responsibility to the community and positive character traits. These ideas motivated me to further explore bullying and possible ways to eliminate it in the elementary classroom.

Organization of the Thesis

The remaining four chapters examine and research the issue of bullying in schools. Chapter two reviews relevant research on bullying and character education. Chapter three describes the context in which the study takes place and the design of the study. Chapter four looks at the data collected during the course of the research study and analyzes the findings. Finally, chapter five summarizes the study's results and discusses implications for other teachers and educators.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Bullying is a growing problem in the United States. Every single day, thousands of children are bullied across the country. This chapter looks at research studies and articles that have already been conducted on bullying. The first section of this chapter discusses various definitions of bullying, the prevalence of bullying, and different forms of bullying. The second section looks at common characteristics of bullies. The third section of this chapter discusses common characteristics of bullying victims. The fourth section discusses the effects of bullying, both long and short term. The fifth section compares different programs and strategies that teachers, children, and parents can use to prevent bullying in schools. Finally, section six looks at character education and the role that it plays on bullying.

What is Bullying?

Which of the following examples constitutes bullying?

- Johnny ran up to Bobby on the playground and stole his lunch money before punching him in the stomach.
- “Baby, Baby stick you’re head in gravy! What’s wrong with you? You’re such a baby!!” Jen screamed to Samantha.
- “Don’t play with her... I heard her family is poor”

When thinking of a definition for bullying, scenario one may most readily come to mind. However, each of these scenarios show examples of one individual bullying another.

Specific definitions of what bullying actually is vary depending on who is stating it. One definition of bullying comes from Olweus who states that “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.” (Weissbourd, 2003, p. 6) Another definition by Banks (1997) gives specific examples of what bullying is “Bullying is comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim... bullying may also be more indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion.” (p.1) Beane (2005) defines bullying as, “...when a stronger, more powerful person hurts or frightens a smaller or weaker person deliberately and repeatedly” (p.16).

While there are many ways to define bullying, it all comes down to this, bullying is any acts committed by an individual, whether physical or verbal, that harms another person and continues over time.

Forms of Bullying

Many different actions or statements can be considered a form of bullying. According to Beane (2005), bullying can include, name calling, teasing, lying, being rude, ignoring people, hitting, and embarrassing people. According to Coloroso (2003), there are three different types of bullying: verbal, physical, and relational. Verbal bullying is the most common for both boys and girls, and makes up 70% of all bullying. Besides being the most common, it is also the easiest to get away with because it is not

always easy to detect. Verbal bullying includes racist slurs, name calling, sexually abusive remarks, and belittling. It is extremely harmful to the victim and may be a first step toward more brutal and degrading violence (Coloroso, 2003). The second type of bullying is physical bullying. This type is the most observable and identifiable, but actually only makes up approximately one third of all bullying incidents. Physical bullying includes slapping, poking, kicking, and spitting. The older and stronger the bully gets, the more dangerous the bullying situation can become. Individuals who carry out this form of bullying are usually the most troubled and are more likely to get in criminal trouble as adults (Coloroso, 2003). The third form of bullying is relational bullying. Relational bullying includes ignoring, isolating, shunning, snickers, and hostile body language. This form is the most difficult to detect and is often overlooked (Coloroso, 2003).

Bullying can be broken down into two categories. One form of bullying is direct bullying. This form of bullying includes teasing, hitting, punching, stealing, etc. In other words, any physical action that one individual takes against another. This form of bullying is most commonly perpetrated by boys. On the other hand, indirect bullying includes spreading rumors or excluding an individual from social situations and is most commonly engaged in by girls (Rowan, 2007).

Characteristics of Bullies

There are no cookie cutters for the “typical bully.” However, there are several characteristics that the majority of bullies seem to possess. According to Banks (1997), typical bullies:

- Have a need to feel powerful

- Have a need to be in control of others and the situation around them
- Derive pleasure from inflicting physical and emotional harm on others
- Have little empathy for their victims and claim that the people they bully deserved it for saying or doing something they did not like
- Often come from homes where physical violence is used
- Are taught that violence is an acceptable way of solving problems
- Parental attention, involvement, and caring is often missing
- Insubordinate and rude to adults
- Do not follow rules
- Have strong self esteem and little anxiety

Beane (2005) also identifies additional characteristics that bullies may have.

Students who bully others tend to love to win, and hate losing. They also blame others for their problems and refuse to accept responsibility for their mistakes or bad behavior. Bullies often have a few close friends, or followers, who go along with whatever they say; however, they have difficulty fitting into groups. Finally, bullies tend to have no problem using and mistreating other people to get what they want (Beane, 2005).

In addition to the general characteristics that most bullies possess, Coloroso (2003) identifies seven different types of bullies and characteristics. First, is the confident bully. This bully has a big ego and an inflated sense of self. They feel superior to others and have no empathy for their victims. These individuals are often admired by their peers but may or may not have a lot of friends. The second type of bully is the social bully. This individual uses gossip, rumors, and isolations to hurt their victims. They bully because they have a poor sense of self and are jealous of others. These people

tend to be manipulative and devious; they pretend to like other students but really do not care about them at all. Third is the fully armed bully. This person has little emotion, is detached from their peers. This person has a strong drive to bully and is very vicious; however, they are charming in front of adults. Fourth is the hyperactive bully. This individual struggles with academic and social skills, and tends to have trouble making friends. The fifth type of bully is the bullied bully. This person is both a bully and a victim. They strike out against those that are weaker than themselves to feel relieved of their own powerlessness (Coloroso, 2003).

The final two types of bullies are not individuals, but groups who engage in bullying together. The first group of bullies is called a “bunch”. This is a group of friends who engage in bullying actions that they would never do by themselves. They tend to be the “nice” kids who know that what they are doing is wrong. The final type of bullies is a gang. A gang is a tactical alliance who work together to achieve power. As time goes on, they begin to disregard their own lives for the group; all that matters is the good of the group (Coloroso, 2003).

Characteristics of Victims

Just like there is not an exact blueprint for a bully, there is not a blueprint for the victims of bullying either. However, just as many bullies have similar traits, so do many of the victims of bullies. According to Banks (1997), victims of bullies typically:

- Suffer from low self esteem and are insecure with themselves
- Are not risk takers
- Do not have social skills equal to their peers
- May or may not have friends

- Are close to their parents, who may be overprotective
- Are smaller and weaker than other children their age

Peckham (2007) identifies additional traits that may be common to the victims of bullying including being in special education, obesity, or have developmental disorders that make them different than their peers.

Effects of Bullying

Short Term Effects

Children and teens who are bullies in school suffer from a few short term effects. According to Macklem (2003) bullies tend to have problems following school rules and are late or absent from school often. Bullies often have academic problems as well, and have lower achievement scores than the students that they bully. Finally, bullies are more likely to need special education, mental health services, social services, and juvenile justice services (Macklem, 2003).

Being bullied often at school can cause many short term effects on the victims of bullying. According to Banks (1997), as a result of being picked on constantly at school, many victims of bullying hate going to school. They do not feel safe and are afraid of what might happen to them while they are there. This fear can cause students to fake being sick or come up with some other excuse to stay home. A study of eighth graders in the United States found that approximately 7% of students stayed home at least once a month to avoid being bullied. (Banks, 1997) As well as missing school often to avoid being bullied, victims have a higher drop out rate than non-victims. (San Antonio and Salzfas, 2007)

The most severe and serious effect of bullying is school violence and shootings. A U.S Department of Education study found that two-thirds of students who carried out school shootings were the victims of physical or verbal bullying. (San Antonio and Salzfass, 2007) One specific example of this is the shooting that occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. It was stated that the shootings were carried out by the two students as an attempt to get back at all of the “jocks” that had bullied them at school (Schaefer, 2007). Another example of an instance where bullying went too far occurred in March of 2005 in Minnesota when Jeffery Weise killed nine of his fellow students before taking his own life as a result of a life time of being bullied (Schaefer, 2007). Not only do these victims of bullying respond to being bullied with violence against others, they also respond with violence against themselves by taking their own lives (Schaefer, 2007).

Long Term Effects

The long term effects of bullying have been studied by many individuals across the world, and they have found that being a bully or the victim of bullying can lead to serious effects on the rest of an individual’s life.

Individuals who were persistent bullies when they were younger tend to carry those negative and aggressive behaviors with them into their adult lives. These behaviors may be physical or verbal, but they definitely have a negative impact on their relationships with others (Banks, 199). Students who are identified as bullies in elementary and middle school are more likely to be involved with sexual assault and harassment incidents when they reach high school (Maklem, 2003). Also, there is a strong correlation between being a bully as a child or teenager and having legal trouble as

an adult. One study found that 60% of individuals who were bullies from 6th-9th grade were convicted of at least one crime by the time they were twenty-four. (Banks, 1997)

Not only the bullies themselves suffer long term effects, but their victims do as well. A common long term effect of being the victim of bullying as a child is problems with depression and low self esteem in adulthood. (Banks, 1997) However, most victims of bullying are not bullied or victimized as adults (Macklem, 2003).

Interventions

What can teachers do?

Teachers who notice bullying going on in their school or classroom have an obligation to try and do something about it. Peckham (2007) offers suggestions of steps that teachers and administrators can take to help reduce the occurrence of bullying in schools. First, teachers and administrators should work to create a school climate that is accepting and does not tolerate bullying. While creating this caring climate, it is important for schools to not ignore situations when bullying does arise. It is extremely important to respond to bullying incidents quickly and effectively to show students that it is not tolerated and to help the victims feel safe in their school. In order to do this effectively, teachers and staff members need to be provided with the proper training on how to respond to different forms of bullying (Peckham, 2007).

Along with creating this caring school environment, teachers should create lessons and activities that include all students. This will allow multiple opportunities to make friends and no one will feel left out or excluded. These lessons should include activities, books, movies, etc. that address bullying to teach students why it is not acceptable (Peckham, 2007).

While all these interventions are extremely important, perhaps the most important thing teachers and administrators can do is model respectful and considerate relationships with others (Peckham, 2007). By doing this, students will see positive ways of interacting with each other and, hopefully, these behaviors will integrate with their actions and beliefs.

What can victims do?

While teachers and administrators have an obligation to try and prevent bullying, there are steps that the victims themselves can take to elevate the situation. The most important thing a victim of bullying can do is tell an adult that they trust about what is going on (Peckham, 2007). They should not be encouraged to just wait it out and hope that the incidents will stop. When the bullying is actually taking place, victims should try not to cry or get upset; bullies love to hurt others and seeing that they have power over others and seeing their victim cry may only make the bullying worse (Beane, 2005). Another strategy that Beane (2005) suggests is to stand up to the bully, look him in the eye, and say, "Leave me alone!" or "Stop! I don't like that!" Bullies enjoy picking on someone who won't defend themselves, and standing up to them may be just enough to make them stop. Finally, when students are being bullied they should just stay calm, and walk away, especially if they can join another group of people because bullies don't usually bully people in groups (Beane, 2005).

What can parents do?

The most important thing that parents can do to help their children deal with bullying is to believe them when they say that they are being bullied at school (Beane, 2005). Peckham (2007) also offers suggestions of steps that parents can take to prevent

bullying. Parents of both bullies and victims should be encouraged to model respectful and appropriate ways of interacting with other people, rather than resorting to name calling and violence. It is very important to make sure that children feel comfortable talking to their parents about their fears and worries. This will help children to feel more comfortable discussing situations regarding bullying with their parents. If parents become aware that their child is a bully or is the victim of bullying, not only is it important to talk to the child about the situation but it is also important to contact the school so they are aware of the problem and can keep an eye on it when the parents are not present. Parents of bullies need to demand that the behavior stops, and not allow their children to continue bullying others. (Peckham, 2007) If the child lacks friends or is not involved in activities, parents should consider enrolling them in a club or organization to help them meet new people and make friends; this will help the children gain more confidence in themselves which, in turn, will reduce the likelihood of them being the victims of bullying (Beane, 2005).

Character Education

Character education is a term used to describe curriculum and school practices that promote children's development of positive traits and values in school. There are two main components that make up a character education program. First, students are educated on the proper way to act in society and the rules and norms for the society in which they live. Second, children are educated in personal responsibility and are taught the qualities that will make them successful and productive citizens.

According to Lickona, character education programs are designed to accomplish three goals. First, to develop a classroom and school climate that fosters acceptance,

fairness, and cooperation. Second, character education programs look to cultivate students' morals. Third, to discourage children from developing an egocentric outlook on life and the world, and encourage cooperation and respect for others by learning self respect, the ability to see the world and situations from another persons perspective, and traits such as kindness, responsibility, politeness, and honesty. (Peterson and Skiba, 2001)

There are many programs based on educating students on how to be good, productive, and successful members of society. One specific character education program is *Character Counts*. This program was designed for students between the ages of 4-19. The backbone of this program is the "Six Pillars of Character." These pillars, or values, include: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Each pillar is defined, taught, and reinforced school wide to insure that children are developing values that will help them be successful and productive adults.

While character education programs have become increasingly more popular over the past few years, little research has been done to determine the effectiveness of these programs. However, one would hope that when schools promote and teach fairness, kindness, and respect, a positive school climate will emerge and that this climate will be a way of preventing bullying in schools and classrooms.

Conclusion

As the research has shown, bullying is a serious problem in schools that negatively affects all students. These effects can range from not wanting to attend school and poor grades, to school shootings and suicide. Teachers and administrators have an obligation to do everything in their power to reduce the amount of bullying in schools.

One thing that can be done is educating students about bullying and providing them with strategies that they can use to protect themselves.

The goal of this study is too determine what happens when students are taught about bullying and provided with helpful strategies to keep themselves safe with the hopes that the amount of bullying will be reduced and a caring classroom environment will emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the school district, school, and classroom that my research is conducted in. The second part of the chapter discusses qualitative research and why my study falls into that category. Finally, the chapter will describe my research plan in detail, and how that research will be evaluated.

Context of the Study

School District

Beach Cove, (name has been fictionalized) New Jersey is a small town, only 6.16 square miles in area. The total population of the town is a little less than 12,000, about 6,000 females and 5,500 males. The average age of residents in Beach Cove is thirty-six years old (city-data.com).

Beach Cove is mainly made up of white residents; however, it does have a diverse minority population as well. Caucasians make up approximately 84% of Beach Cove's occupants. Approximately 10% of its occupants are African American, and 3% are Hispanic. The remaining 3% are made up of two or more races, American Indian, and other races (city-data.com).

Beach Cove is not an extremely wealthy district. The average household income is approximately \$52,500. The average house or condo in Beach Cove is worth \$181,800 (city-data.com).

The average education level for Beach Cove residents is as follows:

- * High school or higher: 79.6%
- * Bachelor's degree or higher: 13.2%
- * Graduate or professional degree: 2.4%
- * Unemployed: 4.9%

School

Sunset Elementary School (name has been fictionalized) is a relatively large school that holds 615 students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade. The school also has a few TAM, or inclusion classes, and Autistic classes. In all, there are thirty-two classrooms in the building. (School Report Card)

The school has students from a wide variety of backgrounds. While the majority of students are Caucasian, there are also significant African America, Asian, and Hispanic populations in the school. The students also come from a wide array of socio-economic backgrounds. (School Report Card)

Sunset Elementary has a very positive environment that one can feel as soon as they walk in the door. Student work, awards, and pictures are displayed throughout the hallways. The students at Sunset Elementary are very caring and respectful towards one another. This can be attributed to the extensive Character Education program that is taught and enforced in every single grade and classroom.

Sunset Elementary was awarded the Governor's School of Excellence award for the 2005-2006 school year. Sunset Elementary is also a Professional Development School and works closely with Rowan University and the surrounding high schools to help teach future teachers in the area.

Classroom

The classroom that this study was conducted in was a third grade inclusion class. There were twenty-two regular education students and seven special education students in the class. The class was co-taught by two teachers, one certified in elementary education and the other certified in special education.

Research Design

This study was conducted in the spring of 2008 and lasted approximately five weeks. The purpose of this research study is to explore bullying in elementary school classrooms, more specifically a third grade inclusion class. The question that is asked in this study is, “How does educating students about bullying impact an elementary school classroom?”

The research technique used in this study is mainly qualitative research, with some quantitative strategies as well. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), qualitative research seeks to discover patterns that emerge after observing and analyzing a specific topic. Qualitative research focuses on the participants’ thoughts, actions, and how they interpret the world (Maykut and Morehouse). Qualitative strategies such as student journals, my teacher research journal, student and teacher surveys, and the students’ assignments are used as data sources in this study. Quantitative data is derived from student surveys given prior to the unit on bullying being taught, during the unit, and at the conclusion of the unit. The results of this survey are used to determine the amount of bullying that occurs in the class prior to, during, and after the unit. At the conclusion of the study, all of the data sources will be compiled to determine the effect of teaching a unit on bullying in a third grade classroom.

To study the impact of bullying on an elementary school classroom, a unit on bullying will be taught. The unit includes books on bullying, discussions, and projects relating to bullying and bullying prevention.

Sources of Data

There are four sources of data used in this study: student and teacher surveys, student journal responses, teacher research journal, and student assignments and projects relating to the unit on bullying.

The first source of data that is used is student surveys. To determine students ideas and perceptions about bullying before the unit was taught, a pre-unit survey is given. A second survey will then be given once a week until the study is completed to gauge the students experience with bullying during that week. Questions will ask about students' personal experiences with bullying, how often it occurs, and their perceptions of bullying in their school and classroom. Some sample questions for the weekly survey include:

- This week in school, another student in my class:
 - Called me names
 - Said something rude or mean about my family
 - Said they'd beat me up
 - Told me a lie
 - Got other kids to gang up on me
 - Tried to make me hurt someone else
 - Made me feel bad about myself

The possible responses students could choose from are never, once, or more than once.

This method was chosen to see the students' progression, change in beliefs and the amount of bullying over time. Results from all three surveys will be compared to determine the impact of teaching a unit on bullying on this classroom for the class as a whole.

Teacher surveys will also be used. They will be given to both the elementary and special education teacher. The goal of these surveys is to determine if two experienced teachers saw a difference in the climate of the class from the time the unit began until it was completed.

A second method of data collection that will be used is journals. I will keep a research journal and write down observations of what I see going on in the classroom as the unit progresses. Students are also asked to keep a journal. They can write in it as often as they like, but will be required to write at least once a week. Students will be told that anything they write in these journals will be kept confidential. They will be instructed to write down anything that they are feeling, what they learned, or any instances of bullying they have experienced or seen during the past week. These journals will be used to monitor the way that their perception of bullying changes over time.

Finally, students will be completing assignments and projects as a part of the unit such as poster projects and discussions. These assignments will be evaluated to see how well the class is grasping the concept of bullying and different strategies they can use to help prevent it. The following rubric will be used to grade all assignments.

Table One: Rubric

Score	0	1	2
Completeness	Not Completed	Partially Completed	Fully Completed
Answers	Illogical answers, Shows no thought	Answers are logical, Some thought was	Well thought out, Logical responses

		put into responses	
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Permission for this study will be obtained from the school principal and cooperating teachers before any research begins. Also, each student must have permission from a parent or guardian for their surveys, journals, and assignments to be used as data in this study. All surveys will be anonymous, students will not be asked to provide names or any identifying information. Student names in regards to journals and assignments will not be used. All data will be kept in my possession for three years after the completion of my study. At that time, all data will be shredded and disposed of.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

The focus of this research study was to discover how educating students about bullying would impact an elementary school classroom. This section reviews all of the data collected during this research project. The data consisted of student surveys, teacher surveys, student journals, teacher research journal, and student work.

Student Surveys: Pre Unit Surveys

Students were given a pre-unit survey to gauge their knowledge of and experience with bullying. Out of twenty-three students, only seven said that they had never been bullied by someone they went to school with. When students were asked where they had been bullied in the past, ten stated that they were bullied in the classroom, eight were bullied during recess, five were bullied during lunch, one was bullied in the bathroom, and six were bullied in the hallway. In addition, students were asked how they felt when they were bullied. Eight responded that they felt scared, one felt stupid, two felt bad, one felt mad, and two felt sick to their stomachs.

Student Surveys: During Unit Surveys

Students were also given a different survey at the end of each week to see how often they were bullied by other students in the classroom in that week. Below are charts

that break down the bullying behaviors that happened to the students once or more than once throughout the week. The behaviors include:

- Behavior 1-Called Me Names
- Behavior 2-Said Something Rude or Mean About My Family
- Behavior 3- Said They'd Beat Me Up
- Behavior 4-Told Me a Lie
- Behavior 5- Got Other Kids to Gang Up on Me
- Behavior 6-Made Me Feel Bad About Myself

Chart One: Week One

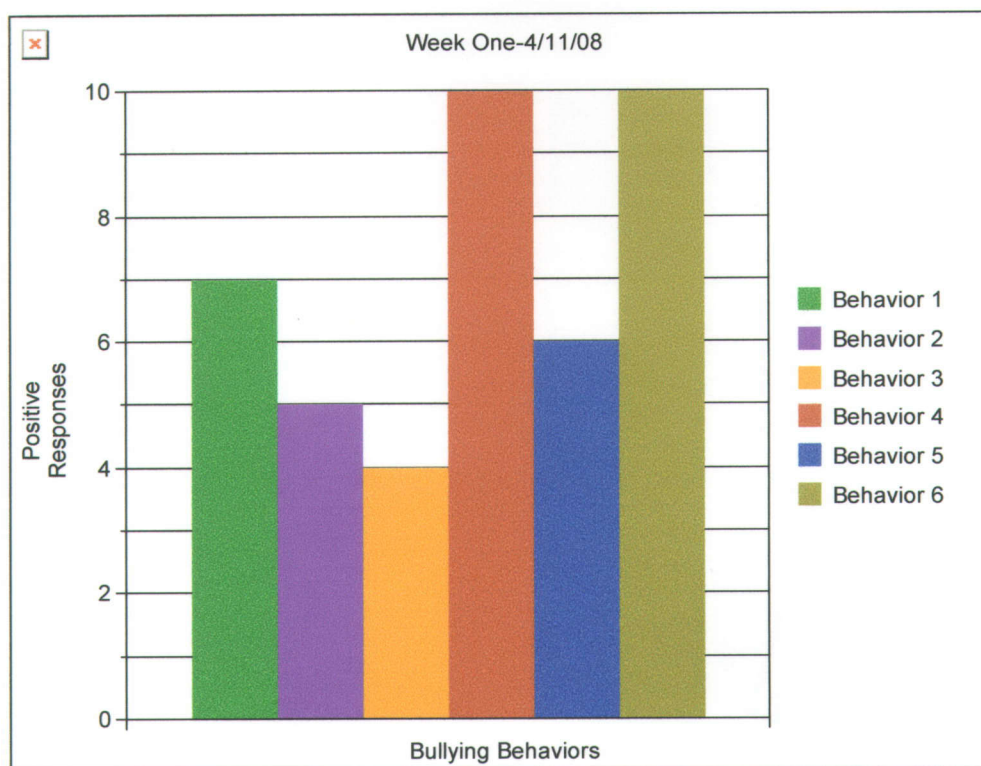


Chart Two: Week Two

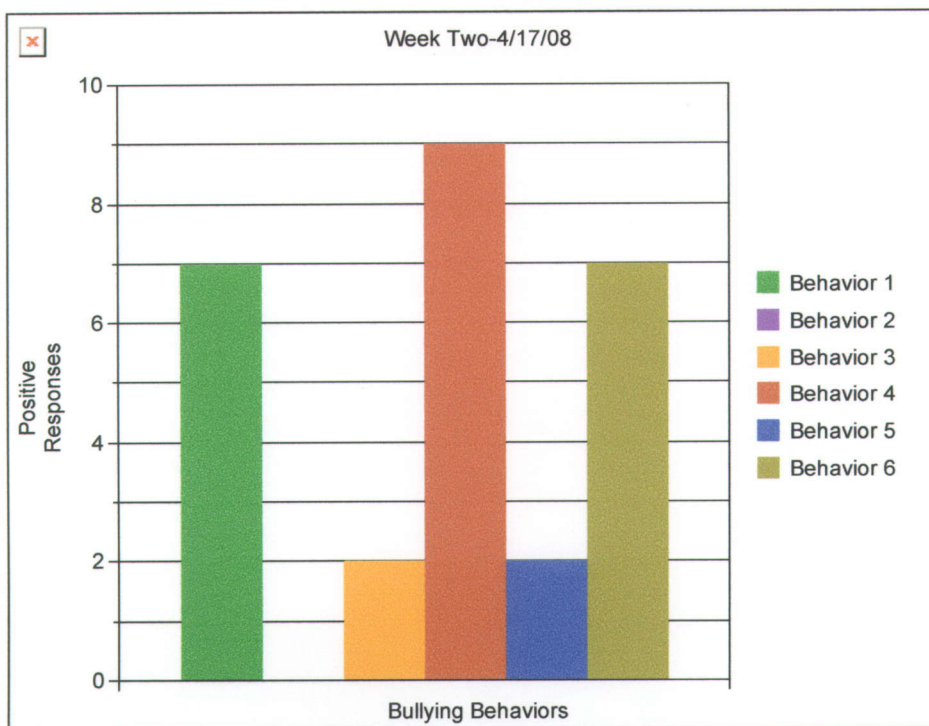


Chart Three: Week Three

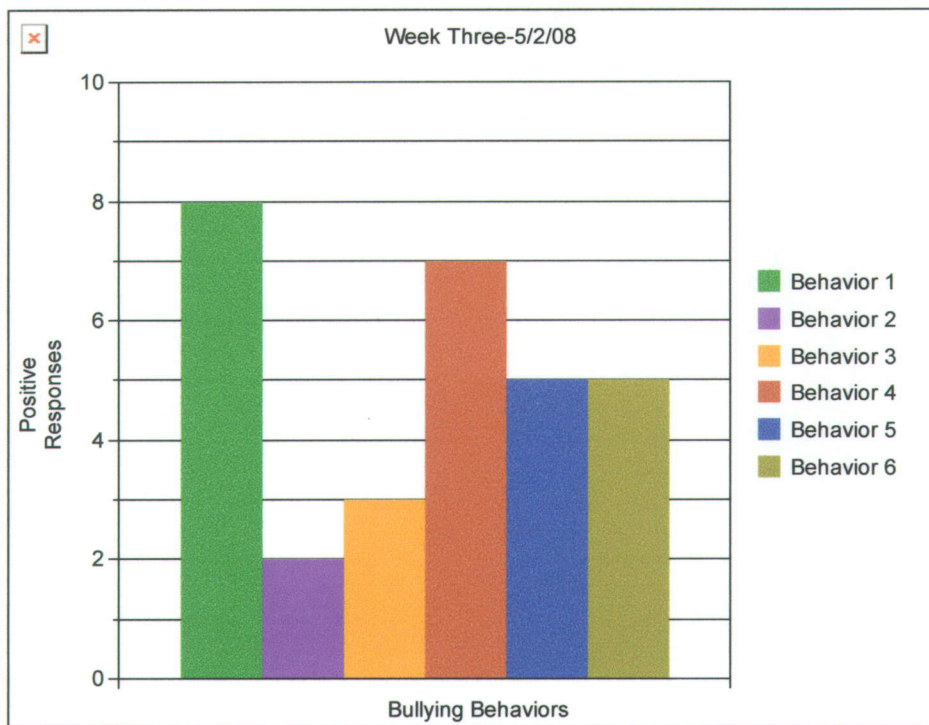
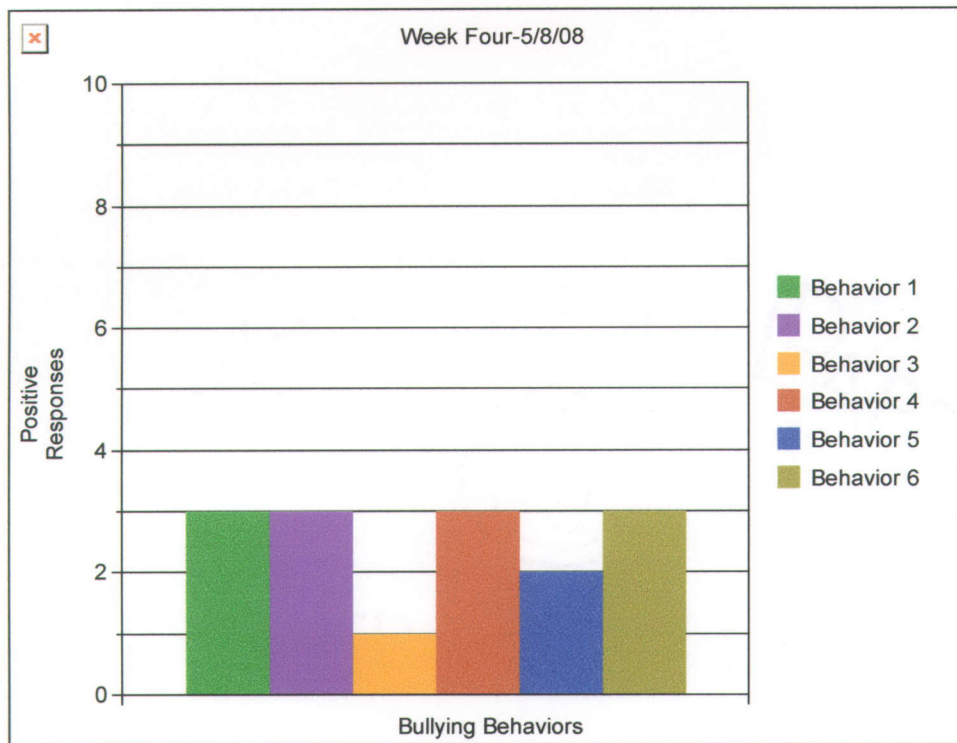


Chart Four: Week Four



Teacher Survey

Two classroom teachers completed a survey document together and their consensus response appears below.

Question 1: Do you think that this school has a problem with bullying?

Response 1: This school has the same issues as any average school. There are occurrences, but they are, from what we can tell relatively minor.

Question 2 : Do you think that there was a problem with bullying in this classroom before the unit was implemented?

Response 2: No, we didn't really see evidence of it.

Question 3: How successful do you think this unit was in reducing the amount of bullying in the classroom?

Response 3: We think it certainly made us aware of things that were occurring in our class without our knowledge. We think this did reduce some of the bullying because we were able to address it.

Question 4: What could be improved?

Response 4: More time allotted and frank discussion would only help make our students more aware of the bullying problems.

Question 5: Would you do something like this again?

Response 5: We would be interested in trying something like this again.

Student Journals

Students were asked to respond in journals at the end of each week. They were told that they could write anything they wanted as long as it had to do with bullying. Possible responses included their feeling on bullying, what they learned, or something that they thought the teachers should know. Below is a listing of some of the student's journal responses. All names have been left out.

- "I liked learning about bullying. Someone in our class everyday always says something rude about my clothes. I am not going to say who it is but, who else always talks a lot and is the "queen" of fashion."
- "I liked learning about bullying because it helped me not to do it and to tell other people not to do it. I learned that when you bully something or someone, your just hurting yourself. Don't do it because it isn't cool don't do it at all for any reason."

- “I learned that bulling is rong (wrong). And that you wont have any friends if you bully.”
- “This person is making me more mad. She keeps making more and more of her friends to bully/push/hurt me and my friend. Every day she chases me and my friends and she catches us and pushes me and hurts me and I cant take it. She got in troble (trouble) by the aid (aide) and still does it.”
- “I think they should be nice and we should put the wown (wrong) things and the right things on the bourd (board) and the wrong things to raise there hands and tell how to stop them from happing again.”

Teacher Research Journal

Throughout the four week span of this research project, a teacher research journal was kept. Notes on class behavior, specific bullying instances, and student discussions were kept in this journal. As time went on, less and less notes were made on specific instances of bullying. Instead they were replaced with student comments during discussions and ideas that they had to reduce the amount of bullying in the school.

Below is a few excerpts from the teacher research journal.

- March 11, 2008- There were a lot of problems with bullying in class today. First, I saw one of the girls in my class crying. Took her out in the hall and she told me that Johnny and Becky (names have been changed) were making fun of her because she was left back in first grade. I called the other two students out into the hallway and asked them what was going on.... I told her that it was something personal about Shannon (name has been changed),that there was nothing wrong with it, and that it was no ones business but Shannon's.

- April 24, 2008- The class had a really great discussion today about why a person might bully. Some of their answers were very insightful and well thought out and I was very impressed. Some of their reasons were that they had been bullied themselves and wanted revenge, that they wanted to seem “cool”, maybe they had been bullied at home, and maybe they were sick or having a bad day.

Student Work

Student work consisted of class discussions, worksheets, and an anti-bullying poster. Student work was graded by the degree of completeness and logical, thoughtful responses. The rubric that was used to grade each assignment was included in Chapter Three. All of the students received full credit on all of the assignments. All posters and worksheets were completed and student responses were logical and thoughtful.

One of the questions that students responded to was “Write one good thing you could do if you saw someone picking on someone else.” Some student responses were:

- I would go up to him and stand up for the person being bullied.
- I would tell a teacher or stand up for him carefully so I don’t become the bully.
- I would ask him to stop and if he didn’t I would tell a teacher.

Another question consisted of a picture of a boy pointing and laughing at another boy who was sitting on the ground crying. The bully was saying, “You can’t even catch a ball. Ha Ha Ha.” The question that went along with this picture was, “Why do you think this boy is saying that to the other boy?” Some student responses included:

- I think it’s because he was being bullied at home.
- I think he is trying to impress (impress) the people next to him.

- I think he's doing this because when he was yonger (younger) he might have got bullied and it's revenge.

Finally, students were asked to list why someone who is being bullied might not tell anyone. Some student responses included:

- He might be scared
- People might think he is a sissy if he tells
- He is scared it will get worse
- The kid is cool and everyone will be against him/her
- They are afraid it might get worse
- They could be getting threatened
- They want to look tough
- They might not want to talk about it

Students were asked to create anti-bullying posters in pairs. They were told that they needed a creative slogan for each of their posters. Some of the slogans included:

- Buddies not Bullies!
- Shake the bullying out of your life!
- Stop being bullies, Go being buddies
- Bullying is lame! Being nice puts you on top of the game!
- No bullying in the world!

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This chapter will answer the research question by interpreting the data that was collected. It will also list implications and limitations of the study. Finally, it will give recommendations for future research on the topic.

Interpretation of Data

The goal of this study was to determine if teaching students about bullying would reduce the amount of bullying in a classroom and create a more caring classroom environment. This study shows that educating students about bullying is effective in reducing the amount of bullying in a classroom. The more exposure students have to the dangers of bullying, the less likely they were to bully their peers.

Student surveys were given each week to determine the number of occurrences of six target bullying behaviors during the course of that week. The charts in Chapter Four show the positive responses for each behavior broken up by week. Chart One: Week One in Chapter Four shows that during the first week of the unit on bullying, there were forty-two positive responses to the six target bullying behaviors. Chart Two: Week Two shows that during the second week there were twenty-seven positive responses to the six target bullying behaviors. Chart Three: Week Three shows thirty positive responses, and Chart Four: Week Four shows fifteen positive responses. The charts show that over the course of the unit on bullying the number of occurrences of the target bullying behaviors greatly

decreased. The number of responses in the first week was cut almost by two-thirds by the last week, showing a 65% reduction in the amount of the target bullying behaviors.

The behaviors that showed the highest occurrences in week one were “told me a lie” and “made me feel bad about myself” both having received ten positive responses. Over the course of the four weeks, the positive responses for both of these behaviors steadily decreased until both received only three positive responses in the final survey. This decrease shows that not only did the amount of bullying decrease, but that the classroom environment became more positive because less and less children were being made to feel bad about themselves.

In addition to the charts showing the student survey results, the teacher survey demonstrates that the classroom teachers thought that the unit was beneficial to them, as well as the students. The unit gave the students an opportunity to talk about what they were seeing going on in the classroom and discuss what was happening to them. This, in turn, made the teachers more aware of the bullying going on in their class and they were able to address the problems, thus eliminating some of the bullying occurrences.

The change in the classroom environment can also be seen through the student work and journal responses. Multiple students stated that they enjoyed learning about bullying because it made them realize that they should not be doing some of the things that they were doing. Many also stated that the unit helped them learn what to do if they saw someone bullying a classmate, such as telling a teacher or aide. They also stated that the unit made them realize that bullying their classmates would not make them “cool,” and that bullying someone else would actually hurt them in the long run.

The various data results show that over the course of the four week unit on bullying, the target class reduced the amount of bullying that occurred and a more caring classroom environment was formed.

Implications of Study

Bullying is becoming an increasing problem in schools all across the country. Students are being teased, threatened, and physically assaulted every day, and as teachers we have an obligation to do something about it.

This study shows that educating students about bullying is effective in reducing the amount of bullying in a classroom. Teachers should make sure that their students know that bullying will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences if they choose to bully. This cannot just be enforced at the beginning of the year. It needs to be in the forefront the entire year and consequences must be consistent throughout the year. In addition, character and bullying education cannot just be left to the sole responsibility of the teacher. The entire school needs to take a stance and state that bullying will not be tolerated.

It is especially important to teach young children about the dangers of bullying. This will teach them to be kind to each other and to solve problems without hurting each other physically or emotionally, before it is too late and serious problems, such as school shootings, occur. While it is important to start educating students about bullying at an early age, it should continue on throughout their education. If it is simply taught once and not reinforced each year, the lessons will not stick and students may begin to bully again.

Finally, educating students about bullying will not take away from subject instruction and can even be incorporated into the regular curriculum. For example, students could write a story about someone being bullied in English. Teaching students about bullying will not take a lot of time, but it will have immense results.

Limitations of Study

The major limitation of this study is that it is strictly a snapshot in time. It focuses on one class, in one school, in one town in the United States. Results may vary greatly depending on the type of district, class, age of the students, as well as many other factors. Also, the opinion of only two teachers was consulted along with this study. If more teachers were involved, their opinions may have differed from the two that did participate.

In addition, a few students in the class did not return signed consent forms and were not allowed to participate. Perhaps their opinions and experiences would have changed the results of the study. Along the same lines, some students were absent when some work and surveys were given and their answers and comments may have also impacted the study's results.

Finally, the class that was studied did not have a major problem with bullying before the unit was taught, according to the two classroom teachers. If the students in the class were more prone to bullying or the classroom climate tended to be more negative, the study may have turned out differently.

Recommendations for Future Research

If a study similar to this was going to be done again, the researcher suggests using a larger sample of students. An entire grade level or school should be studied, if possible.

That will give a much broader picture of the bullying climate in the school as a whole, rather than just in one classroom. Also, the opinions of more than two teachers will be very beneficial in judging the school climate as well as giving more opinions of how the unit went and how the students responded to the study.

It would also be beneficial to conduct this study for the entire school year. It would give a long term look at the students and the school climate, rather than a snapshot of a four week period.

Conclusion

While this study does have its limitations, it does show that for the one target class the unit on bullying did positively impact the amount of bullying in the classroom and the overall classroom climate. As with every study, improvements can always be made and different strategies could be taken. However, the results show that the goal of this study was reached, and that teaching students about the dangers of bullying will reduce the amount of bullying in a classroom.

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